

Blair Cabin  
Girard, Pennsylvania  
Erie Co.

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District No. 5-Pennsylvania  
*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings*

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Karl E. Morrison, District Officer  
319 Marine Bank Building, Erie, Pennsylvania

BLAIR CABIN  
Girard, Erie County, Pennsylvania

Owner.

Blair Family.

Date of Erection

1818.

Architect

Unknown.

Builder

Probably Jamee Blair.

Present Condition

The building is in a state of dilapidation, the roof is entirely gone, and only portions of it are still standing to tell the story of its existence.

Number of Stories:

One and one-half.

Materials of Construction:

Pine, black walnut, poplar and similar woods. All hand or early saw-mill construction.

Records:

Family and Court House records. Personal interviews.

Additional Data-Bibliography:

History of Erie County, Pennsylvania; Chicago, Warner Beers and Co. 1884.

A Twentieth Century history of Erie County, Pennsylvania-Chicago -1909. The Lewis Publishing Co.--John Miller, historian.

History of Erie County, Pennsylvania, 2 Vols. Historical Publishing Company 1925. Topeka--Indianapolis, by J. E. Reed (John Elmer).

History of Erie County, Pennsylvania. Philadelphia, Lippincott Co. 1861 by L. G. Sanford (Laura G.). Published by author and copyrighted by her in 1894.

Nelson's biographical dictionary and historical reference book of Erie County, Pennsylvania, Erie, 1896. Two-thirds of this book by Benjamin Whitman. From the press of Wilson, Humphrey and Co. Fourth St., Logansport, Indiana.

PA  
25. GIRARD

BLAIR CABIN  
Girard, Erie County, Pennsylvania

James Blair was born in the eastern part of Pennsylvania about the year 1777. His parents were both natives of Pennsylvania. His father died when he was a child. James came to Erie County in 1803, and was engaged on the preliminary survey of the county. He acquired a piece of land located about three miles south of Girard, heavily covered with timber, and erected a log cabin on the place. Sometime in 1804 he brought his family to Erie County. His initial purchase consisted of four hundred and one acres located about one mile southwest of where the Blair Log Cabin is, purchased presumably from Harm Jan Huidekoper. He worked seven years on this farm and the title proving deficient gave up the claim. The first house was built back from the crossroad (Ore or Alden road) but he had no water on the place.

He bought 100 acres of a four hundred plot and erected another cabin. There are assertions that it was constructed in 1811, but the family records seem to favor 1818 as the date, and a possible confusion may exist because of the first cabin or cabins for it is also said that the Blair Log Cabin is the third structure he erected.

He married Miss Mary Wallace in Washington County December 25, 1803 and had eight children: William (deceased), Joseph (deceased), David P. and Samuel who afterward resided in Fairview, Erie County, John (deceased), Robert (deceased), and Jane (deceased).

A tradition exists in the neighborhood as follows: David Blair, keeper of sheep, Joseph Blair, carpenter, James, a financier, Samuel an elder (Presbyterian church), Robert a farmer, and John a farmer, and the neighbors draw attention to the parallel Biblical characters who did the same.

James Blair, the pioneer died in 1855.

During the war of 1812 most of the men were at Erie, Pennsylvania, Mrs. Blair had three small children, one a baby to look after and also had to run the farm. Even the local preacher's wife tried to bind oats, wheat, etc. in the fields in those days. In re-purchasing his farm, James Blair paid for most of it, at \$3 per acre, in maple sugar.

The Blair log cabin was 26' 8" long, 20' 5" wide and about 15' high. It was a story and a half or perhaps a two story house. The first floor had a "Family Room", or as it would be designated today a Living Room, 19' 1" x 15' 8", a bedroom 8' 10" x 12' and a hall with stairway 5' 7" x 6' 10" from which the stairway ascended to the upper floor. The stairway had one step to a platform landing and a turn with ten steps to the second floor. The cabin faced south. An imposing mantel constructed throughout of black walnut ornamented one side of the family room. It had a brick hearth 8' 9" wide and 5' 4" high to mantel shelf with a 4' 5" opening to mantel, width about 7' 6". The wood used for this mantel was black walnut with a cove moulding and shelf about 8" wide. Above the mantel shelf were black walnut

## BLAIR CABIN

boards of random width grooved, and a 5" finish frieze board of black walnut to the second floor joists which were about  $4\frac{1}{2}$ " 9". On the left hand side of the fire-place was a cupboard of black walnut random width boards, also grooved and fitted 7' 6" high and 5' 8" wide. The door of the cupboard was 6' 6" by 2' 3". On the right hand side of the mantel was a door opening to the outside 2' 6".

There were three doors and four windows, the mouldings of the window casing being of poplar, a saw-mill made moulding put together with square-pointed nails, or square shaped nails pointed. The glass opening or size of the windows 2'  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " by 3'  $8\frac{1}{4}$ " with 12 lights. An inside baseboard with a  $5\frac{1}{4}$ " bevel was used in the house. The upper floor undoubtedly had three bedrooms. A tradition exists in the family that Indians frequently came and looked in the windows at the family as they were at meals, but that they never caused the Blairs any trouble.

David P. Blair was born May 11, 1818 on the homestead farm and lived there afterward. He followed farming and lumbering. He married Caroline Wallace of Washington County, Pennsylvania. One son Robert W. Blair was born to Mr. and Mrs. Blair. He resided on the farm. He married and his widow with her son, Robert Brownley, now occupy the home which stands between the Blair cottage and the road. Robert Brownley Blair is the great grandson of James Blair, the pioneer.

While there are no historical incidents connected with this cabin or its occupants, Nature has supplied the spectacular "Devil's Backbone" of Elk Creek located on the farm.

*Annie Scott Baxter*

Approved

*Harold Morrison* Dist. Off.  
July 31, 1936.

*Rev. Oct. 8. 36 T.T.W.*